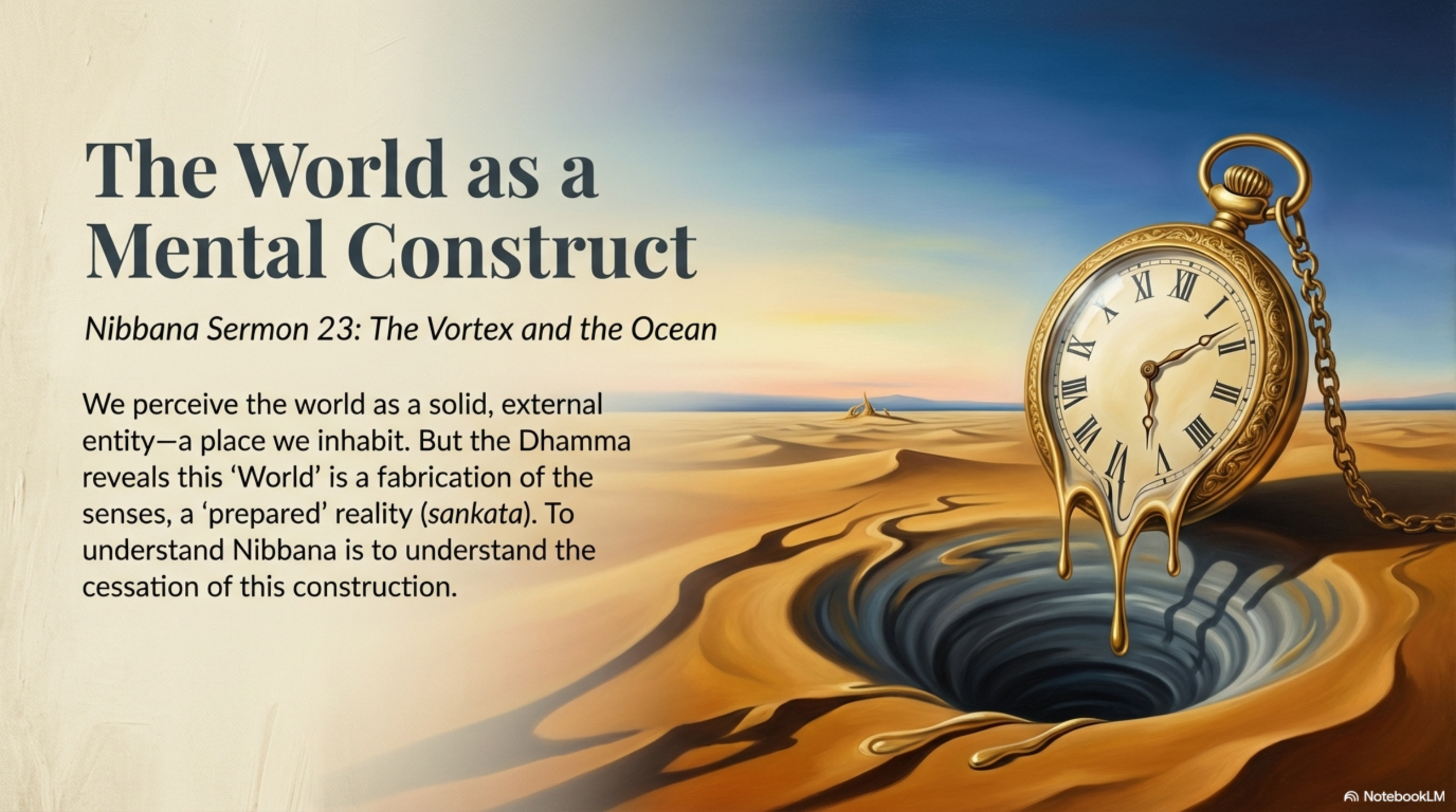
The World as a Mental Construct

Nibbana Sermon 23: The Vortex and the Ocean

We perceive the world as a solid, external entity—a place we inhabit. But the Dhamma reveals this ‘World’ is a fabrication of the senses, a ‘prepared’ reality (*sankata*). To understand Nibbana is to understand the cessation of this construction.



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The Flotsam of the Vortex

The ‘worldling’ sees only the debris rotating in the Vortex—the sensory objects arising and passing away. They mistake this rotation for reality.

Even after a vortex ceases, debris may still spin for a time.
But the Arahant looks deeper. Where the vortex ends, the ‘Great Ocean’ remains—undifferentiated, unique, and silent.

To give up the limitations of the vortex is to inherit the limitless ocean.

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The Magic Kettle Fallacy

We watch the world with curiosity, waiting for the kettle to empty or the basin to overflow. We are captivated because we fail to see the hidden tube—the circularity of Dependent Arising.

The world fills and empties simultaneously. If we understood that the water is merely recycling, the curiosity—and the craving to watch—would vanish.

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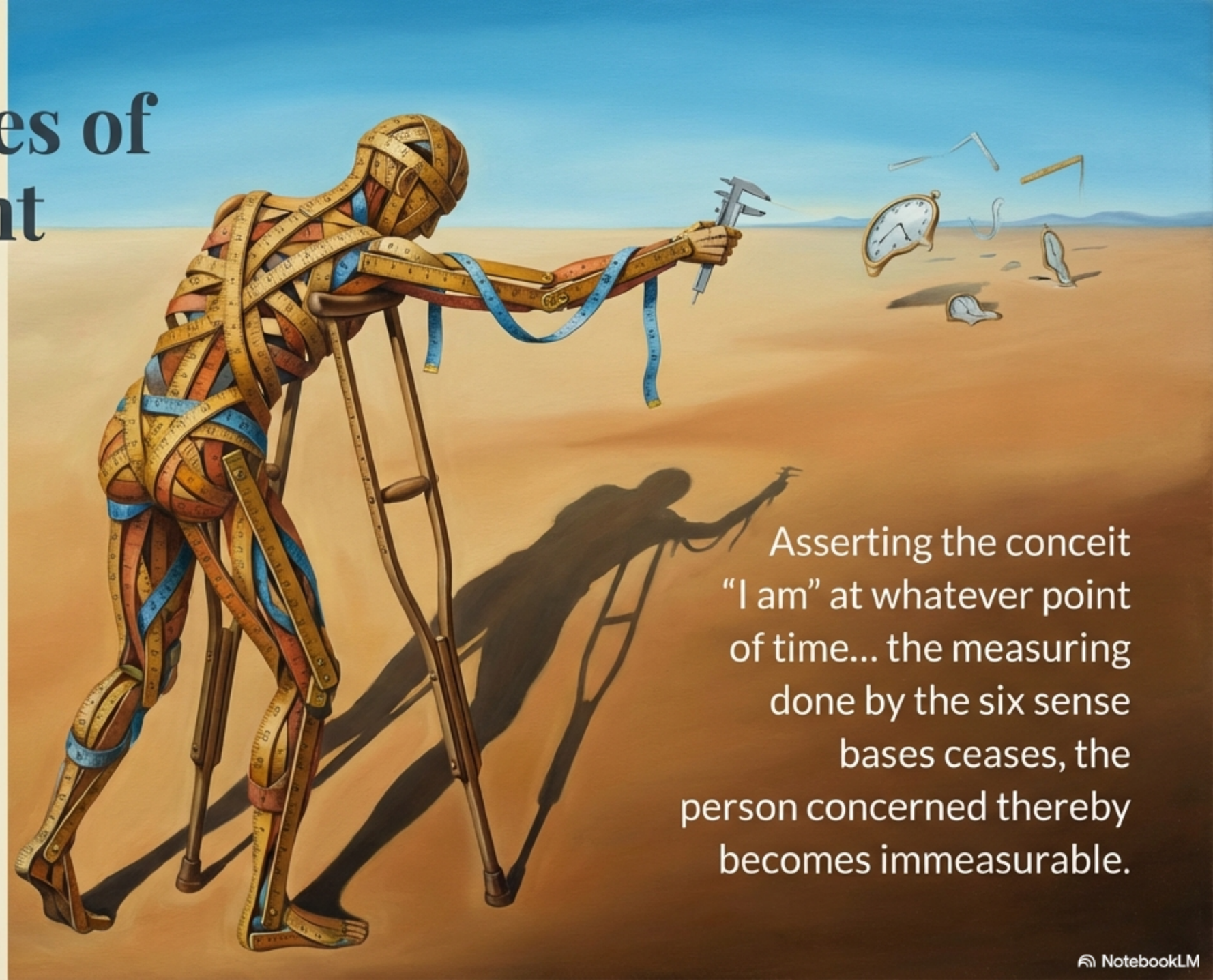
The Six Scales of Measurement

We attempt to quantify existence using “primordial scales” scales”—the inch, the hand, the foot.
In the Dhamma, the true scales are the Six Sense Bases: Eye, Ear, Tongue, Tongue, Body, and Mind.



Asserting the conceit “I am” at whatever point of time… the measuring done by the six sense bases ceases, the person concerned thereby becomes immeasurable.

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The Legend of Rohitassa

Rohitassa, a deity who could step from the eastern to the western ocean, spent 100 years running to find the “end of the world.” He died on the journey, having never reached the edge.

The Buddha declared that the end of the world cannot be known, seen, or reached by traveling. As long as you treat the world as a place to traverse, you remain trapped in it.

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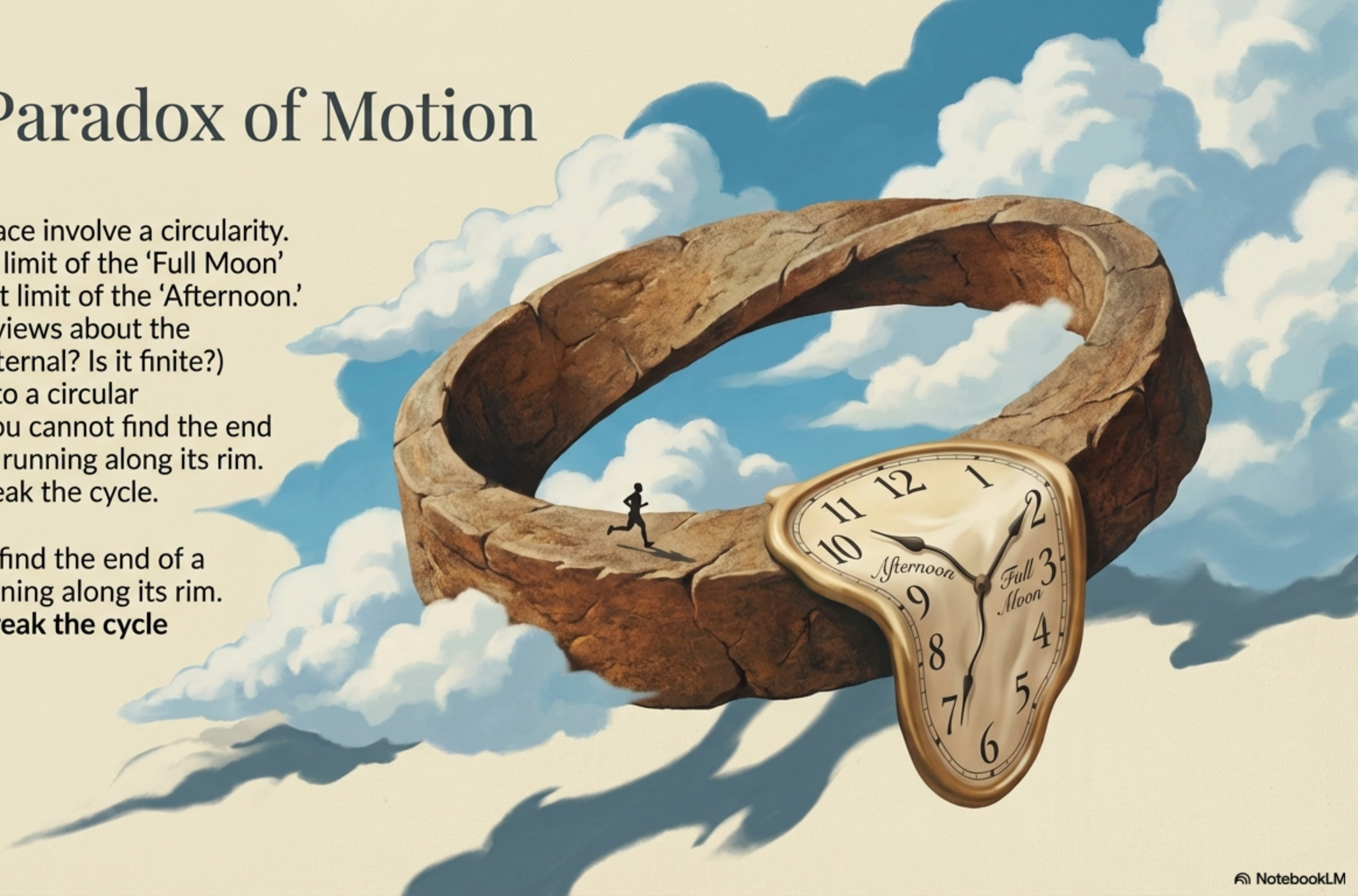
The Paradox of Motion

Time and space involve a circularity. The furthest limit of the ‘Full Moon’ is the nearest limit of the ‘Afternoon.’ Speculative views about the world (Is it eternal? Is it finite?) always lead to a circular argument. You cannot find the end of a cycle by running along its rim. You must break the cycle.

You cannot find the end of a cycle by running along its rim. You must **break the cycle entirely.**



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The Definition of “The World”

The Buddha redefines “World” (Loka) in the discipline of the Noble Ones:
“That by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world—that is called the World.”

The Eye is the world. The Ear is the world. Apart from the six senses, there is no mechanism to know a world. The world IS the apparatus of perception.

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Papanca: The Fictitious Network

From simple contact, the mind proliferates. We create “I am,” “This is mine,” and “The world exists.” The world is precariously perched on a network of grammar and logic. We confuse the map (concepts) with the territory.

“Whatever is the range of the six senses, that itself is the range of conceptual proliferation.”

The Fire Ordeal (The Exorcism)

The philosophy of voidness is an exorcism. It is a ‘smoking out’ (vidhupana) of the malignant ‘personality view’ ingrained in the mind.

He stands fumigating the hordes of Mara like the sun irradiating the firmament.

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Philosophical Surrealism

The Fathom-Long Body

It is in this very fathom-long physical frame, with its perceptions and mind, that I I declare lies the world, the arising of the world, and the cessation of the world.

This is not about the physical body as biology, but the body as the locus of experience. The solution is here, not "out there."

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Breaking the Epicycle

The Vortex is powered by the interplay between **Consciousness** and **Name-and-Form.** They prop each other up like two sheaves of reeds.

To stop the world, you do not travel to its edge. You separate the reeds. "With the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form." This breaches the cycle.

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The Cessation of Perception

When the six sense bases cease (stop measuring), the ‘World’ ceases. The contact between subject and object is broken.

This is not annihilation, but the end of the illusion. It is the remainderless fading away.

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Unmanifest Consciousness

‘Consciousness which is non-manifestative, endless, lustrous on all sides.’ Here, earth, water, fire, and air find no footing.

Long and short, fine and coarse, beautiful and ugly—all dualities are cut off. The Vortex has stopped; only the Ocean remains.

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The Lotus in the Fire

The Arahant is the lotus arising from the cesspool of Samsara. They have realized the cessation of the world while still alive.

To reach the end of the world:
Do not run.
Stop measuring.
Look within.
Break the cycle.

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